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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
Sixteenth session
13-31 January 1997

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON ITS SIXTEENTH SESSION

Draft report

Rapporteur: Ms. Aurora Javate DE DIOS (Philippines)

Addendum

VI. IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 21 OF THE CONVENTION

B. Statements by senior United Nations officials

Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund

1. At the 314th meeting, on 15 January 1997, the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) addressed the Committee, observing that the work of the Committee had been ground-breaking, notably in the context of women's health, and in particular of women's reproductive health. The guarantee of reproductive rights was indispensable in achieving gender equality and the improvement of women and those goals were essential conditions for achieving sustainable development.

2. She indicated that UNFPA had been honoured to sponsor, together with the Division for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the recent round table of human rights treaty bodies on human rights approaches to women's reproductive and sexual health and rights, and acknowledged the important role played by the Committee in that initiative. The round table, which was the first occasion at which experts from all six human rights bodies as well as representatives of United Nations agencies and of NGOs had been brought together to address a thematic issue, made a number of recommendations, in one which it called upon treaty bodies, United Nations

agencies, NGOs and others to strengthen their working relationships so as to foster a gender-integrated human rights perspective in their respective programmes. The Executive Director made clear that UNFPA had already sought to implement a number of the recommendations of the round table and had met with the Division and the Commissioner to discuss follow-up actions.

3. She also expressed the view that the human rights treaty process was critical in creating an international standard that transcended culture, traditions and societal norms. Although the latter were important forces binding societies together, they should not be used to force women into a subordinate role, damage their health and minimize their contributions to family, the community and their countries.

Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund

4. Also at the 314th meeting, the Committee heard an address by the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). She indicated that 1996 had seen progress towards a close relationship between the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child and noted that the UNICEF Executive Board had designated the rights of children and women as one of the three areas for follow-up of the Fourth World Conference on Women. She emphasized the importance of the first joint meeting of the two committees held at Cairo from 16 to 25 November 1996, and described the several subsequent follow-up meetings to that meeting. She also observed that, under UNICEF's Mission Statement, the organization was guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and was committed to the principle of non-discrimination and the equal rights of women and girls.